

Dunghlison (rev.)
On the Blind, and Institutions for the Blind, in Europe.

A

LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT

OF THE

BOARD OF MANAGERS

OF THE

PENNSYLVANIA INSTITUTION

FOR THE INSTRUCTION OF THE BLIND,

BY

ROBLEY DUNGLISON, M.D. ✓

CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE OF INSTRUCTION. X

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At a Meeting of the Board of Managers of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Instruction of the Blind, held on the 5th of October, 1854, it was—

“*Resolved*, That the report, made by Dr. Duglison on the condition and progress of the several European systems of instructions of the Blind, be referred to the Chairman of the Committee of Instruction, for the purpose of being printed, and of being hereafter embodied in the next Annual Report of this Board.”

LETTER ON THE BLIND.

To the President of the Board of Managers of the
Pennsylvania Institution for the Instruction of the Blind:

SIR,

In accordance with a resolution of the Board of Managers, passed on the 2d of March last, requesting, that "during my contemplated absence from the country, I would examine the different Institutions, having cognate objects with our own, in such parts of Europe as I might visit, and report upon the same on my return, recommending such changes, if any, as it might seem to me desirable to have introduced into the organization and action of this Institution," I determined, wherever opportunity offered, to carry into effect the expressed wish of the Board. I have to regret, however, that it was impracticable for me to visit some of the most celebrated, without subjecting myself to much inconvenience, owing to their not being situated in the route which time and circumstances compelled me to pursue. In this way, I was denied, also, the pleasure of seeing the venerable Abbé Carton, at Bruges, who has devoted a long life to the study of the Blind, and from whom I had been induced to differ, I was informed, on certain points connected with the best form of printing for them.

For similar causes, I was able to take a view of general topics only, connected especially with the instruction of the Blind.

In the school for the Blind at Liverpool, no great effort is made at intellectual training. The pupils are generally from the lower classes, and are sent to the institution by the parish. The great

desire, consequently, is to have them instructed in some mechanic art, by the exercise of which they may cease to be chargeable to the parish, or be enabled, wholly or in part, to maintain themselves. A good deal of attention is bestowed on music; and it is found that a great portion of the pupils succeed in becoming good organists, and teachers of the organ, as well as of the piano forte and singing. Mr. Addenbrook, the superintendent, stated to me in conversation, that from his own experience, a large proportion of the pupils, on leaving the institution, were better able to maintain themselves by their knowledge of music, than by any trade they might have learned whilst there; and that they had repeated applications for organists for churches which they were unable to supply. He added, that if my short stay in Liverpool had not prevented him, he would have been happy to make me a statement, giving the names of pupils who had left the institution during the last few years, and are now realizing an annual income of from £20 to £150 (\$100 to \$750) by their abilities in that way. The number that have left the institution on being appointed organists in various parts of England, in the last five years, is fifteen, and most of them are doing well.

The present number of inmates is 90,—55 males and 35 females. Of the former, 24 are learning the piano and organ, and of the latter 20.

In a letter to me, dated April 15, 1854, Mr. Addenbrook explains himself more at length on the subject of musical instruction.

“In regard to blind persons being best enabled to maintain themselves after leaving the institution, I find, from experience,” he remarks, “that a larger portion of our pupils, on leaving here, succeed better as organists and teachers of the piano forte, in comfortably establishing themselves, than by any trade taught them here, as they have not the same difficulties to grapple with in the profession of music, in competing with seeing people, as they have in following a trade; and it too often happens, when they leave here, that they have no home to go to, nor any kind friend to take them by the hand, and give them those little helps which the blind so much need from seeing people,—the future home of a great portion of the pupils leaving here, being the workhouse, where it too often happens, they are deprived of the opportunities of pursuing what they have not been allowed sufficient time to acquire during their sojourn in this institution; it being not at all unusual for me to receive, from the parochial authorities to which the pupils belong, an inquiry if

So and So is not now able to maintain himself, although his stay here may have been even less than twelve months. The prospect of the pupils being enabled to keep themselves, without the assistance of their parish, on their leaving here, is the chief, and indeed I think I may say, nearly the only inducement for their being sent here at all." "It affords me," he adds, "much pleasure to learn from the reports with which you have kindly furnished me, that the friends of your institution have provided a 'Home' for that class of pupils to which I have alluded, and I sincerely hope the time is not far distant when the charitably disposed in this country will follow the example so liberally set them on the other side of the Atlantic."

I have long been anxious, that the experiment should be fairly tried, of educating our pupils, who may be capable of the duty, as organists, and have felt satisfied that properly directed efforts would enable us to have them introduced into the churches. I know that hesitation exists in regard to their entire fitness, in the minds of many of those in whom the appointment of the choir is vested; but that there is no valid reason for this is sufficiently shown by the experience of the Liverpool Institution, which equally exhibits that the Blind are capable of filling satisfactorily the office of teachers of the piano forte. The Pennsylvania Institution for the Blind possesses admirable instruments for instruction, especially the organ; and every encouragement exists to the complete musical education of competent pupils, in order that they may, on leaving the Institution, be able to maintain themselves as organists, and teachers of the piano forte more especially.

At my request, Mr. Addenbrook was so kind as to furnish me with the amounts received from sales, as well as those paid in wages, materials, &c. during the years 1850, 1851, 1852 and 1853.

Table showing the Amounts received from Sales, as well as the Amounts paid in Wages and Materials, &c. during the years 1850, 1851, 1852, and 1853, at the School for the Blind, Liverpool.

	Am. rec'd from sales in 1850.			Amount paid in 1850.			Amount rec'd in 1851.			Amount paid in 1851.			Amount rec'd in 1852.			Amount paid in 1852.			Amount rec'd in 1853.			Amount paid in 1853.			Total amount rec'd in 4 years.			Total amount paid in 4 years.			Total amount gained in 4 years.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.			
Ropery,	286	4	3	219	7	4	217	6	7	185	11	8	187	14	3	132	5	0	121	19	4	96	15	4	813	4	5	633	19	4	179	5	1
Mats, &c.	83	5	3	50	8	2	147	3	4	82	17	7	132	8	0	69	1	7	299 10 5			209	8	4	1082	11	1	687	10	3	395	0	10
Rugs, &c.	119	4	2	77	7	8	147	19	4	100	0	6	152	12	7	98	6	5															
Baskets, &c.	167	5	4	110	18	3	140	4	6	102	15	9	164	18	0	121	8	10	233	16	1	164	11	6	706	3	11	499	14	4	206	9	7
Knitting, &c.	119	2	9	66	2	5	118	7	11	66	4	8	117	9	6	77	12	10	187	11	9	114	8	0	542	11	11	324	7	11	218	4	0
Sash Cord, &c.	34	14	10	4	18	7	15	0	6	7	10	3	25	17	7	11	17	0	19	7	8	20	2	2	95	0	7	44	8	0	50	12	7
	809	16	7	529	2	5	786	2	2	545	0	5	780	19	11	510	11	8	862	5	3	605	5	4	3239	11	11	2189	19	10	1049	12	1

Ropery Manufactures—are all sorts of twine for sale, as well as rope and materials used in making mats, lobby cloth, &c.

Mats, &c.—are tarred mats, Manila and cocoa fibre mats, fibre open mats, kneeling pads, &c. &c.

Rugs, &c.—are worsted, carriage, hearth, door rugs, doylies, twine, jute and coir, and coir lobby cloth, &c.

Baskets, &c.—are all kinds of willow work, hampers, &c.

Knitting, &c.—are fancy knitting, and all kinds of wool work, hair plaiting in guards, &c.

Sash Cord, &c. is six sizes sash cord, various sizes of blind cord, and fancy picture cord, &c.

To the School for the Indigent Blind, St. George's Fields, London, I paid a short visit, in the company of the Rev. B. G. Johns, the chaplain, who, by the way, is the author of the article on the Blind, in the Number for January, 1854, of the *Edinburgh Review*. It is an extensive establishment, but contained only one hundred and fifty-four inmates in 1853, of whom sixteen form a permanent class; "who, for special reasons are retained in the Institution for life, most of whom have now reached an advanced age, and are chiefly employed in the instruction of younger pupils, and in the household work. The remaining one hundred and thirty-eight pupils, varying in age from ten to twelve years to about twenty-five, are employed in acquiring such a knowledge of some useful trade as shall hereafter enable them to earn a livelihood, or at least save them from becoming entire burdens to their friends;" "a point"—the chaplain remarks—"of no small importance, when it is remembered, that the majority are children of indigent and needy parents."*

In the Liverpool—and still more in the London—Institution, I was surprised to find how little attention was paid to the intellectual development of the pupil, and how limited, consequently, was the range of his studies. "All the pupils," the chaplain reports, "up to a certain period of their residence, attend daily in the school-room, where they are taught to read, to write by means of a frame in embossed Roman letters, being also instructed in the four simple rules of arithmetic." "It is in a very few instances, that the art of reading cannot be acquired, and where that is mastered on Alston's system"—the system in use with us—"the power of writing is very soon attained. The four simple rules of arithmetic are studied by the upper classes of boys and girls, less time being of course"—says the chaplain—"devoted to this acquirement, than to the far more important one of learning to read and understand the Scriptures—one main object in the pupil's admission into the school."

The following table of attendance at school and of industrial work exhibits the time devoted to each:—

Time in Institution.	Hours in School-room.	Industrial Work—Hours daily.
3½ years,	Two daily.	In summer, 6¼ winter, 5¼
4th year,	Omitting one day.	2 additional per week.
5th year,	„ two days.	4 additional per week.
6th year,	„ four days.	8 additional per week.

* Extract from the Chaplain's Annual Report to the Committee of the Blind School, St. George's Fields, Jan. 1854.

An idea may be formed of the industrial work, carried on within the Institution, from the following table of classification of employment.

	Baskets.	Mats.	Shoes.	Weaving.	Spinning.	Sash Line.	Knitting & Netting.	Total.
Males, . . .	53	9	15	5			1	81
Females, . .	4				7	8	58	73
Total,	57	9	15	5	7	8	59	154

During the year 1853, the proceeds of goods sold to the public, and received from the manufactory for the use of the house, amounted to upwards of £1370 (nearly \$7000).

It would appear, that in London there is difficulty in procuring situations for those who have been taught the organ; “and it is much to be regretted”—observes the chaplain—“that any difficulty should exist in procuring situations for blind organists, even when well qualified, especially as the pupil, who becomes a musician, rarely masters a trade, or shows much skill as a reader. It is, therefore, a matter of grave importance, that, before making application for a pupil to receive musical instruction, his friends and patrons should seriously consider, whether, in the event of the application being successful, they have a fair chance of securing for that pupil employment as an organist or teacher of music. Few of those, who study music, give to their industrial or school-work more than a small share of their attention and energy. The pupil who leaves the school a good musician, and is able at once to command employment, may do well; but if, from lack of talent or other causes, he is unable to find employment as a musician, or to gain his living by working at a trade, he will probably become a burden, which his friends are little able to support.”

It is manifest, that the intellectual training of the Blind is regarded, in that institution, as a secondary object; and I could not help pointing out, with some degree of pride, the list of subjects taught in our institution, as contained in the 21st Annual Report, and contrasting their teaching to read, to write, and the “four sim-

ple rules of arithmetic," with our "Orthography, Reading, Writing, Arithmetic (mental and on slates), Geography, Maps and Globe, History of the United States and General History, Synonymes, Rhetoric, Natural History, Natural Philosophy, Astronomy, Algebra, Geometry, Trigonometry, Constitution of the United States, Physiology, Moral and Mental Philosophy, Geology, and Biblical Literature." It will be recollected, too, that those "four simple rules of arithmetic" are studied in the London school only by the "upper classes of boys and girls;" and that a "main object" of the pupil's admission into the school is stated to be—to teach him the "far more important acquirement of learning to read and understand the Scriptures."

It was gratifying to me, however, to find, that in other institutions of Great Britain the mental culture of the Blind received a full amount of attention. The asylum of York, of which the Rev. W. Taylor was formerly honorary superintendent; and those of Bristol and Newcastle, were mentioned to me as eminent in this relation.

In the Bristol Asylum, the musical study of the pupils has always been directed to the training of organists. The churches of Berkeley, Bridgewater, and St. Michaels, in that city, have been supplied from the choir of the asylum; and they have little fear of the blind organist being unable to supply sufficient variety of music to his audience, as, in one of the recent Reports, it is stated that a pupil was able to play 300 pieces of music from memory, and another 200, with 22 choruses in addition, all which were learned in five years.* Nor do they consider that there is any limit to his musical attainments, provided he can procure friendly aid to read new music to him.

They are much impressed with the great advantage to be obtained from employing the blind as assistant teachers, especially in the initiation of newly entered pupils; and they deem it "invaluable by giving that encouragement and support, which is of the utmost importance in the management of the blind."

In the "Historical Sketch" of the institution, a brief reference is made to successful results. "At Birmingham there is a basket maker, who, eighteen years since, was a pupil at Bristol. He has supported his wife and family by his labour, and considers himself

* An Historical Sketch of the Bristol Asylum for the Blind. By the Honorary Secretary. Bristol, 1854.

to have a fair share of the work of the town. Another, in Wales, has married, and did recently employ four labourers. One, in Dorsetshire, is in full employ: a loom was required by a pupil in Cornwall: two girls have been, and one still is, engaged as teachers in the London and Exeter Asylums: there are five organists in active employment, one of whom instructs the clergyman's daughter of the parish where he lives. A young man, who recently quitted the Asylum, has married, and settled at Westbury, Wiltshire, where he has much occupation as a successful teacher of music. One young woman has been engaged as companion and instructress to a blind young lady of high respectability; while returns are perpetually received of the efficient establishment and well doing of others."

No institution could probably furnish a greater number of successful examples than our own; and I quote from the sketch of the Bristol Asylum, chiefly for the purpose of exhibiting, that competent organists are sent forth from the institution, and that they, also, are able to find remunerating employment.

The "*Institution Impériale des Jeunes Aveugles*," at Paris, is a noble establishment. It was founded by Haüy in 1784, and is governed and administered under the authority of the Minister of the Interior, by a responsible director, M. Dufau, well known for his valuable services in instructing and ameliorating the condition of the blind, aided by a consulting commission composed of four members.

The instruction afforded to the pupils is *intellectual, musical, and industrial*. The intellectual instruction is divided into the *primary* and the *superior*.

Primary instruction includes reading a type formed of projecting points, originally suggested by a man of wealth, M. Barbier, whose life was spent in more or less successful endeavours to improve this department of instruction; but in its present form—as adopted every where in France—it is the invention of a born blind person, Louis Braille, a former pupil and a professor in the institution. A specimen of this type, which has the advantage of not being stenographic, but is liable to objections as being arbitrary, accompanies this letter.

For writing, a style is employed, the characters being formed from right to left, so that when the paper is turned they may be read in the ordinary direction.

Besides these objects of intellectual instruction, the course of

primary instruction, which extends over four years, comprises sacred history, grammar, geography and arithmetic, general notions of ancient and natural history, and the history of France.

The course of *superior instruction* comprises geometry, physics, and cosmography, literature, general history, and political geography; and general notions of public, administrative, and private law. The ancient languages are not taught, for the not very solid reason that "the course ought to be directly useful." The most advanced pupils are sent to some of the courses of lectures delivered by eminent professors of the Sorbonne, or of the Collège de France. Appropriate readings are undertaken before the different classes, which are combined so as to make the pupils acquainted with the best productions of ancient and modern literature.

A weekly examination is made of each class by the professor, the results of which are communicated to the director; and every three months there is a general examination of every department of instruction, after which reports are sent to the families of the pupils, containing remarks on their health, conduct and progress.

The *musical instruction* comprises the study of the *solfeggio* and of harmony; practice on one or more instruments; and especially a school for composition, the organ, and the tuning of pianos. The institution has been successful in procuring excellent situations for its pupils as organists. The churches of Saint-Etienne-du-Mont, Saint-Germain-des-Prés, Saint-Denis (Marais), Saint-Philippe-du-Roule, and of the Hôtel-des-Invalides, of Paris; and, in the departments, the cathedrals and parochial churches of Tours, Orléans, Meaux, Limoges, Blois, Evreux, Contances, Joigny, Sens, Metz, Saint-Lô, Rennes, Sedan, La Flèche, Clermont, Gisors, &c., are supplied with blind organists, former pupils of the Paris institution; and many more are employed as professors of music in convents and boarding schools.

The *industrial instruction* comprises the making of baskets, brushes, chair seats, turning, thread and rope making, and every kind of mechanic art accessible to the blind; and for the girls, spinning, different forms of net and straw work, &c.

The musical as well as the intellectual instruction is given by blind professors, former pupils of the institution. "Experience has proved," says M. Dufau, "that no master is better for the blind child than one who, born in the same state of infirmity, has known how, by persevering efforts, to triumph over obstacles which nature has imposed on him. No one can better guide the child in a road

which he has travelled himself, and whose asperities are so well known to him.”*

When the pupil has made some progress, especially in instrumental music, his instruction is advanced or completed, by placing him under a skilful seeing professor. Some of the pupils have been admitted at the *Conservatoire*, and have taken part in the courses of the distinguished masters who direct that great musical establishment. “They do not figure there,” says M. Dufau, “in the rank of the lowest of their disciples; and some of them, at the *concours* at the end of the year, have obtained honourable distinctions.”

The time allowed the pupils to complete their education is generally eight years.

Nothing like a “Home” is connected with the institution, but different charitable foundations, and, amongst others, the “*Société de patronage et de secours en France*”—of which M. Dufau was the founder—furnishes them with material aid under special circumstances. A summary of the number of pupils who have been admitted in to, and been discharged from, the institution, of late years, is interesting. It appears, that from the first of June, 1840, to the first of May, 1852, the number in the establishment was 411; from which must be taken 174, the number actually there, which leaves 237. From this number must be deducted 74, viz. 40 who died in the institution; 16 sent away as unfit to receive any kind of education, in consequence of physical or moral infirmity; and 18 dismissed for violations of discipline or bad conduct. There then remain 163, who may be arranged as follows:—

1. Admitted into the institution as professors,	-	-	12
2. Organists, professors of music, or tuners of pianos,	-	-	47
3. Returned to their families (rich or in easy circumstances),			52
4. Placed under the patronage of the <i>Société</i> (before mentioned), or in different charitable institutions with means of labour,	-	-	-
			21
5. Left the institution with a mechanic art, which they used with more or less success,	-	-	-
			25
6. Wandering musicians,	-	-	-
			6
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			163

* Notice Historique, Statistique et Descriptive sur l'Institution Nationale des Jeunes Aveugles de Paris. Par P. A. Dufau, Directeur, &c. Paris, 1852.

Four of these musicians were placed, for a time, in the workshop of the "*Société de patronage et de secours.*" The others might have been so likewise; but they ultimately preferred their condition of open or disguised mendicancy to a life of active industry. "God be thanked," exclaims M. Dufau, "they have not many imitators in the institution!"

The whole establishment made a favourable impression upon me, not only as regarded its domestic arrangements, cleanliness, and order, but, also, the efficiency of its intellectual and industrial instruction. Of the former, I was better able to judge; and I can speak of it in terms of commendation. The teachers appear to be competent, and to discharge their duties faithfully; and M. Guadet—the chief instructor or "*Instituteur*"—is, I think, well justified in the "Conclusion" of his "*Mémoire sur l'Etat de l'Education et de l'Enseignement dans l'Institution adressé à Monsieur Dufau, Directeur*" (Paris, 1853), when he remarks, in terms of exultation;—"I cannot avoid observing, in conclusion, that this system of instruction, so extensive and complicated, is accomplished by a seeing '*Instituteur*,' and by twelve blind professors—six of the first rank, three of the second, two aspirants, and a pupil; and asking whether there exists another establishment, scientific and musical at the same time, where so many things are done by so few people; and I may add—and be permitted the remark in favour of our blind professors—at so little expense? Six receive 400 francs [about 80 dollars] each; three 200 francs [about 40 dollars], and the others nothing."

At Vienna, I visited the Institutions for the Blind there, one of which is the imperial "*Institut für Blinde Kinder*" or "Institute for Blind Children"; the other "*Die Versorgungs-und Beschäftigungs-Anstalt für erwachsene Blinde*," or "Institute for the Care and Employment of the Grown Blind." The Institute for Blind Children is by no means large; and I saw nothing there which especially attracted my attention. It is a government establishment, and owes its existence to Johann Wilhelm Klein, who, in the year 1804, made the first attempt in his own country to give a general direction to the instruction of the blind, whence emanated the two institutions of Vienna.* The blind children are employed here in the usual intellectual, musical and industrial exercises; but the

* Die Anstalten für Blinde in Wien u. s. w. Beschrieben von Johann Wilhelm Klein. Wien, 1841.

mental culture is little attended to, the instruction being of the most primary or elementary character. The embossed type, used here, is like that of the Bristol institution—lower case and capitals. I saw at Vienna, however, capitals composed of a succession of elevated points which are excellently made, as is all the type for the blind in the imperial state printing office of Vienna, of which M. Auer is the accomplished director.

An invention, of which I lay some of the beautiful results before you, bids fair to be of great utility to the blind. It consists in placing dried herbs, for example, on a plate of lead, and passing them between two rollers. The lead receives the impression, and raised representations of objects can be taken from the plate *ad libitum*. In this way an admirable herbarium may be formed in relief, which can be fully appreciated by the blind. The specimens on the table were given me by M. Auer, who, with the overseer, Andreas Worring, invented the process, which is termed *Naturselbst-druckerei*, *nature's self-printing* or *natural-printing process*.*

The institute for the care and employment of the adult blind is a private association under the patronage of the Archduke Franz Carl. It contained, a short time before I visited it, about 60 inmates, of whom 26 were males, and 34 females; and afforded relief to 6 others, who resided with their relations. The great object of the association was the establishment of an institution "into which the grown blind, and more particularly those who were discharged from the *Blinden-Institut*, might be received and properly occupied, in order, thereby, to ameliorate their fate, and prevent the evil consequences of idleness and beggary." It is, consequently, a most desirable sequence of the *Blinden-Institut*, and, in many respects, resembles the "Home" in the Pennsylvania Institution for the Blind.

I visited, also, the Royal Institution for the Blind at Berlin. It has not many pupils, and I observed in it nothing especially worthy of note. The ordinary industrial branches are taught; but, as in Vienna, the intellectual development is not much attended to. Of late, a private institution has been established for the grown blind, which is small, but in successful action. M. Hientzsch, the director of the "*Blinden-Anstalt*," has published, recently, an An-

* See Die Entdeckung des Naturselbst-druckes u. s. w. Von Alois Auer. Wien, 1854.

nual, on the condition of the blind in general, and of the blind institutions of Germany—which are numerous—in particular.* It is exceedingly brief, however, and on that account far from satisfactory. In speaking, by the way, of the *Blindenwesen* or condition of the blind in the United States, M. Hientzsch remarks, that the gigantic scale on which things with us are instituted and conducted, which, with them, are small, is a matter of astonishment to them; and he quotes from a recent essay by Dr. Herm. Winner, entitled “*Die Kirche und Schule in Nord-Amerika*”—“The Churches and Schools in North America”—that the best blind institution is the “Peckings (Perkins) Institution and Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind,” in Boston; and that “there are also in the State of New York, blind institutions, on which 18,785 dollars are spent; in Kentucky, in Indiana, in Alabama, and in Michigan;”—omitting, amongst others, our own prominent institution! This may be, in part, owing to the very imperfect arrangement that exists in regard to the interchange of Reports. I no where found any of the recent Annual Reports of our Institution; and there was, consequently, great ignorance of the extent to which our intellectual, musical, and industrial training of the blind is carried. I had, fortunately, with me, some copies of the 20th and 21st reports, which contain a detailed account of every thing relating to those matters, and which were read with much avidity by those in whose hands I placed them.

There was one subject connected with the blind, that interested me, perhaps, more than any other whilst abroad, and my interest in it continues unabated. It has long been the earnest desire of those who have considered the best means of instruction for the blind, that a uniform type should be adopted for all books designed for them; and I was pleased to find, that the subject was engaging the attention of many philanthropists, and especially of the Rev. Wm. Taylor, F.R.S., with whom I had the good fortune to become well acquainted soon after my arrival in London, and who appears to me to possess enlightened views on the whole subject of the education of the blind. He has had ample and varied experience as honorary superintendent of the York Institution, many years ago; has visited the different asylums of Great Britain and the European continent; and for a long period has directed his powers of correct observation and reflection to every point connected with the well-being of the blind.

* Jahresbericht über das Blindenwesen im allgemeinen wie über die Blinden-Anstalten Deutschlands insbesondere. Berlin, 1854.

It was not a little gratifying to me to find, that on every essential topic there was no difference of sentiment between us, and in the great matter of intellectual training an exact accordance.

He has been ably advocating the establishment in England of a college for the education of the wealthier classes of the blind, where they may be taught amongst those of their own rank in life; and is of opinion, that if such an institution were once established, and properly officered, there could be no doubt of its being well supported, as there are many parents who would not object to pay liberally for the advantage of having their blind children regularly educated in an establishment of the kind. "There," he remarks, in a lecture delivered before the Royal Institution, in April, 1853,* "they would have the opportunity of being instructed in the various branches of knowledge. For languages, history, geography, arithmetic, algebra, geometry, mechanics, and all sciences depending upon the mathematics, as well as natural history, music, poetry, chemistry and metaphysics, are within their reach, as has been proved by Blacklock, Baczko, Knie, Saunderson, Weissenburg, Huber, Gough, Paradies, Milton, Moyes, Pfeffel, Küferle, and many others. Modelling in clay, wax, &c., and sculpture, carving in wood, and even engraving have all been accomplished by the blind."

In the London "Morning Herald," of July 13th, 1854, there is a communication from the pen of Mr. Taylor, urging the importance of a college for the affluent blind, in the establishment of which, he will, I trust, ultimately succeed. It was difficult, however, at the time, to interest those who had the necessary influence, so absorbed were they in the political and other considerations of the day, or unwilling to leave the beaten track. He was greatly encouraged by the success of intellectual training with us; and by the evidence thereof contained in our Annual Reports, with copies of which I was able to furnish him.

In a letter to me, after stating that he will pursue with increased energy his endeavours to bring about a uniformity of system in printing for the blind, and the establishment of an institution where their intellectual faculties can be developed and made useful, he adds: "But it is difficult to divert the attention of philanthropists to the subject, and impress them with a true notion of its importance. You take more correct views of these things in America than we do in England, and carry them out more efficiently. I hope we

* Notices of the Meetings of the Royal Institution, 1853. Weekly Evening Meeting, April 8th.

shall be able to exchange books with you, as those who can read the one will, with very little trouble, be able to read the other."

A most important matter is, if possible, to determine upon the precise type most proper to be used in the books to be printed for the early use of the Blind. On this there has been the greatest diversity of sentiment; and if I had not known with what pertinacity proposers of trifling modifications on all subjects will adhere to their notions, it would have astonished me to hear the exclusive opinions, which were promulged on this matter in different Institutions for the Blind. Out of England, I did not meet with an advocate of the stenographic systems. There, however, they are strongly supported in some of the institutions, and in an anonymous letter before me, which was addressed, a few years ago, to the superintendent of an asylum for the blind in the north of England, it is designated "a very fallible idea, that of endeavouring to adopt *one* universal system for the blind." "The motive, no doubt," the writer remarks, "is very good—that of concentrating the money expended upon various systems, and forming a large and valuable library upon that system which is considered the best; but this is not the period for any thing so arbitrary. Invention upon invention will work their way; therefore each must stand the test of its own intrinsic usefulness, whether as regards raised letters for the blind, or any other ingenious discovery for the benefit of the world generally."

The question, however, it appears to me, is not whether the stenographic and other arbitrary systems—as that of Braille, to which allusion was made before—should be wholly abandoned. It may be convenient, should the opportunities of the pupil admit of it, for him to learn, at an after period, one or more of them as an accomplishment—as there are, and will be, books printed in them—but on no account ought an acquaintance with the ordinary type employed by seeing people to be dispensed with or postponed.

On this head the views of Mr. Taylor, as expressed in his lecture before the Royal Institution, appear to me entirely sound. I quote from the published report.*

"The lecturer said, that much difference of opinion existed as to the best alphabet for the blind, some advocating an arbitrary character, some the Roman letters, and some a modification of one of

* At the Meeting of the British Association for the advancement of Science, held at Liverpool in September, 1857, Mr. Taylor read an interesting "*Report on the various modes of printing for the blind*," which was published in the 6th volume of the Reports of the Association.

them; but that he himself preferred the common Roman alphabet, capitals and small letters; and that he was supported in his opinion by Klein of Vienna, Dr. Zeune of Berlin, Knie of Breslau, (himself blind and director of the school in that town,) Jäger of Gmünd, Baczko (blind) &c. &c., all of whom had had from thirty to fifty years' experience." "In this country, also"—he continues—"the Roman letters were preferred in the schools at Manchester, York, Bristol, and several others—also, by Mr. Littledale, of York, who, having lost his sight when six years old, must be allowed to be a good judge. The blind should be associated with the seeing as much as possible in all their habits and acquirements, but an arbitrary character tends to separate them, and make them as it were, a colony of strangers in their own land. Besides, if they have a book in an arbitrary character, and they come to a word they do not understand, who, in a village, could render them assistance? Who could read for them from their book, when they were tired? Who could communicate with them, should they become deaf as well as blind? Almost every alphabet may possess some *single* advantage over others, but the one to be chosen for the blind, should be that, which possesses the *greatest number* of advantages—or is the best as a *whole*. Unfortunately, in comparing alphabets, care is not taken to have them printed the same *size* and same distance apart, and then the comparison is worthless. It is the opinion of the lecturer, that children should be *educated* by means of the *common* alphabet, and if they like, afterwards, to learn any other, on account of some supposed or real advantage it may possess, they might do so." And Mr. Taylor adds. "It should be something very superior, indeed, to induce us to depart from the *ordinary* alphabet, and nothing of that kind has yet come to the notice of the lecturer, although he has examined many systems, and heard many able advocates of them, but, without altering his own opinion, which every day's experience tends to strengthen. One great mistake, in considering which is the best system for the blind is, that the *blind themselves are not sufficiently consulted, for they are the best judges after all*; and in the end, when they have had a fair chance, will decide the question better than the seeing can for them."

Impressed with the force of the considerations presented by Mr. Taylor, and aware that the Roman lower case with capitals has been introduced at the Bristol, Vienna, and other Institutions,—and specimens of the type employed in the two mentioned accompany this letter,—and that the life of "Watt" and other works have been printed in it, it has appeared to me desirable, for the early and general

education of the blind, to adopt that type; leaving all others to be acquired at an after period. The number of the "*Magazine for the Blind*" for August, 1854, which I lay before you, is in two sizes of that type,—the larger to be mastered first; and the smaller intended for the more practised. This type has the advantage, that it is essentially the same as the Boston, from which, however, the capitals are omitted; so that the latter can be easily read after the former has been acquired. There is much force in the remark of Klein, that "as the blind must live among those who see, we should endeavour to make them, in their habits and treatment, as like the seeing as possible, in order to spare them many a painful reflection upon their deprivation."

On my return to England from the Continent, I wrote to Mr. Taylor, stating the impression made upon me, in this relation, by my visits to different Institutions, and in a letter, received a short time before I left England, he makes the following too complimentary remarks. "I am glad to find, that you did not hear any one advocate the *stenographic* characters, for no system can possess *so many* advantages, *on the whole*, as the *letters in common use with the seeing*. Neither orthography nor etymology can be taught by stenographic or other abbreviated systems, nor could written intercourse with others be carried on by them to any *useful* extent. And should a blind person become deaf, the only means of communicating with him would then be by *touch*,—such as writing with the fingers on his hand, back, &c. In that case, what system could afford him so much pleasure and benefit as the common one—known to every body? Had he learned an arbitrary character, he would be like a stranger in a foreign land, where he could only *occasionally* meet with one who could understand him. In short, the thing is almost too absurd to reason upon, and I shall feel doubly strong in advocating the common alphabet—capitals and small—in being permitted to quote the opinions you have so candidly, so clearly, so kindly, and, as all thinking persons, acquainted with the subject, must admit, so judiciously given in your valuable letter of last Monday. I assure you, that, with your influence in America, and the influence of American books in England, I feel, that the day is approaching when people will study the *good of the blind* more than the *gratifying of their own vanity or prejudice*, the only *apparent* motives, which actuate some who invent new systems, without knowing what has been done beyond their own district! The Bristol Committee are, also, powerful allies, and, I am happy

to say, they have obtained the patronage of his Royal Highness, Prince Albert, for their books”.

Before I left this country, I had drawn the attention of the Principal—Mr. Chapin—to an article on the blind in a recent number of the “*Edinburgh Review*,” and had received from him a well written article on the importance of a uniform type for the blind, which I was anxious to have inserted in the “*London Times*,” but after three ineffectual efforts to see the Editor, to whom I had a letter of introduction, the necessity of my proceeding forthwith to the Continent constrained me to abandon any further attempt.

Mr. Taylor was kind enough to present me with “*The diagrams of Euclid’s Elements of Geometry (arranged according to Simson’s edition,) in an embossed or tangible form, for the use of blind persons, who wish to enter upon the study of that noble science*,” which was published by him as long ago as 1828. These, with various pamphlets on the blind, I present to the Board to be deposited in the Library of the Institution.

I have thus thrown before you some desultory remarks on the condition of the Blind, and of the Blind Institutions, which I had an opportunity of visiting during my recent European tour. It will be seen, that I have few suggestions to offer. The general comparative results have, indeed, been such as to impress me most favourably with the one over which you preside. I have seen no where an establishment under better rules and regulations, or, on the whole, better conducted;—none in which the intellectual training of the pupil is more attended to, and where the results are more triumphant; and if it be admitted, as it must be, that the great objects of educating the blind are, as described by Klein, who had half a century’s experience in teaching them—“to alleviate their misfortune; to afford them the means of acquiring knowledge by their own exertions; to develop their capabilities and make them useful, and to render their existence more agreeable; to reconcile them, as far as may be to their fate, and to make them as much like their seeing brethren as possible,” then have we cause for gratulation, that our methods—as is every where admitted—place us in the first rank amongst Institutions for the Blind, and that our success has been such as to cause exultation in the mind of every philanthropist.

I have the honour to be, with the greatest respect and regard,

Your obedient humble servant,

ROBLEY DUNGLISON.

Philadelphia, Oct. 2, 1854.

PAMPHLETS, &c. ACCOMPANYING THE LETTER.

1. Specimens of the Bristol, Vienna, and Paris type for the Blind.
2. Magazine for the Blind, August, 1854.
3. Report of a Lecture on different modes of educating the Blind, by the Rev. W. Taylor, F.R.S.
4. The Diagrams of Euclid's Elements of Geometry (arranged according to Simson's edition), in an embossed or tangible form, for the use of blind persons, who wish to enter upon the Study of that noble Science. By the Rev. W. Taylor. York, 1828.
5. Notices of Literature for the Blind: a Memoir of James Watt.
6. Copy of a Letter addressed to the Superintendent of an Asylum for the Blind in the North of England. [Against a uniform type.]
7. The List of Subscribers to the School for the Indigent Blind, in St. George's Fields, Southwark, instituted 1799; incorporated 1826; and an account of the School, and the Rules for the Election of Pupils. London. June, 1853.
8. Extracts from the Chaplain's Annual Report to the Committee of the Blind School, St. George's Fields, January, 1854.
9. An Historical Sketch of the Bristol Asylum for the Blind. By the Honorary Secretary. 1854.
10. Notice Historique, Statistique et Descriptive sur l'Institution Nationale des Jeunes Aveugles de Paris. Par P. A. Dufau, Directeur de l'Institution. Paris, 1852.
11. Prospectus de l'Institution Impériale des Jeunes Aveugles.
12. Ministère de l'Intérieur. Institution Impériale des Jeunes Aveugles de Paris. Distribution Générale des Prix sous la Présidence de M. Frémy. Année scolaire, 1852, 1853. Paris, 1853.
13. Institution Impériale des Jeunes Aveugles de Paris. Mémoire sur l'Etat de l'Education et de l'Enseignement dans l'Institu-

tion adressé à Monsieur Dufau, Directeur, par M. J. Guadet, Instituteur. Paris, 1853.

14. Die Anstalten für Blinde in Wien u. s. w. Beschrieben. Von Johann Wilhelm Klein, &c. Wien, 1841.

15. Jahres-Bericht über das Wirken des unter dem höchsten Schutze seiner k. k. Hoheit des durchlauchtigsten Herrn Erzherzogs Franz Carl stehenden Vereins zur Versorgung und Beschäftigung erwachsener Blinden in Wien, vom 1 Jänner bis letzten Dezember, 1853. Wien, 1854.

16. Ueber die Erziehung und den Unterricht der Blinden. Von J. G. Heintzsch, u. s. w. Berlin, 1851.

17. Jahresschrift über das Blindenwesen im allgemeinen wie über die Blinden-Anstalten Deutschlands insbesondere. Von J. G. Hientzsch, u. s. w. Berlin, 1854.

18 and 19. Statuten des Vereins zur Fürsorge für erwachsene Blinde. Berlin. And—

Grundzüge des Reglements der Vereinstanstalt für erwachsene Blinde. Berlin.

20. Bericht über die Thatigkeit des Vereins zur Fürsorge für erwachsene Blinde in dem Zeitraume, vom 1 Oktober, 1852, bis ult. Dezember, 1853.

21. Anleitung zur zweckmässigen Behandlung blinder Kinder, für deren erste Jugendbildung und Erziehung in ihren Familien, in öffentlichen Volksschulen, und durch zu ertheilende Privat-Unterweisung. Verfasst von J. G. Knie, u. s. w. Breslau, 1851.

22. Scripture Statements with respect to Religious Doctrines and Moral Duty; adapted as Exercises to the Key to the Second Initiatory Catechism. By James Gall. Edinburgh, 1833. [In embossed type.]